

# *help with* **problems related to alcohol**

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Having a drink can be a great way to relax, but in some cases, too much can lead to problems. If you work in the drinks trade you are likely to have seen this at some point. You may have seen customers drink more than is good for them and you might also find yourself facing personal problems connected with drink. Do not be worried that you are alone in this. Unfortunately, research shows that more publicans and bar staff suffer from cirrhosis of the liver and other alcohol-related health problems than people in other jobs.\*

There are many initiatives in the UK to help the general public consider the implications of excessive drinking. This is just one leaflet that outlines the problems associated with alcohol, and suggests where you might find help if you need it. For further information and advice please refer to the contacts at the end.

## IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE DRINKING TOO MUCH ...

If you do not feel right without a drink, or you find you need a drink to start the day, then you could be becoming addicted. You should stop and think about your drinking if you get to the stage where the amount you drink can put yourself or someone else in any kind of danger.

### How much is too much?

**You count as a heavy drinker if you go above the recommended 'safe' limits (Department of Health Guidelines).**

**If you are a man**, the recommended maximum weekly intake is 21 units of alcohol a week (and no more than four units in any one day).

**If you are a woman**, it is 14 units of alcohol a week (and no more than three units in any one day).

**If you are pregnant**, you should try to cut down much more, or stop drinking altogether. One unit of alcohol is in about half a pint of beer, or two thirds of a small glass of wine, or one small pub measure of spirits.

### What happens if you drink too much?

Drinking too much can lead to lack of co-ordination. It can cause blurred vision, slurred speech and loss of balance. This could lead to accidents at home, at work and on the roads, sometimes with serious results. Drinking too much all in one go could lead to unconsciousness, coma, and even death. Alcohol can also make you do things you wouldn't usually do, as you are less aware of risks. This in turn may lead to family upsets or even problems related to work.

If you drink too much over a long period of time, this can cause major health problems like liver disease and heart failure. It can also increase your risk of getting some kinds of cancer.\* Other long-term side effects can include problems with sleeping, mood swings and violence.

If you're a woman and you drink too much while you are pregnant, you can harm your unborn baby.

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\* Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys(1995) Occupational Health, Decennial Supplement

## FACING UP TO THE PROBLEM

If you are in danger of drinking too much, and think you are becoming dependent on alcohol, the most important first step is to face up to the problem.

### How much do you actually drink?

Do you honestly know the answer to this question?

It is a good idea to keep a diary or log of what you drink, over a couple of weeks.

**Be honest** with yourself: make a note of **all** the drinks you have, and don't underestimate quantities.

### How about cutting back on drinking?

This is easier said than done, but you should consider:

- drinking low alcohol beers, or at least don't drink 'strong' beers or lagers.
- pacing the rate at which you drink. Perhaps you could alternate soft drinks or water with alcoholic drinks. Dilute your drinks.
- eating when you drink as you may then drink less.

### List the reasons why you want to cut down on what you drink?

Write down all the reasons you can think of for wanting to change how much you drink.

Do you think your reasons for cutting down are important? Are they more important to you than your reasons for continuing to drink the same amount?

**If you don't really want to cut down on your drinking, then you'll find it hard or impossible to do so.**

### What sets you off?

If you can't avoid situations that make you want to drink, how can you face up to them and handle them? Can you say no without worrying about other people's reactions?

### Give yourself realistic targets

Set a goal you can stick to. To start with, give yourself a fairly easy target to aim at. Decide what's going to be the **maximum** number of drinks you know you can handle in any week, or any shift at work, or on any particular social occasion. If that works, then see if you can cut it back still further.

**Make it one step at a time.**

### DO SOMETHING to help yourself.

Decide when your new regime will start – and try to stick to it.

Keep a tally of what you drink, and compare it with your target amount.

Don't cheat!

Find ways of refusing a drink.

Confide in your partner, or colleagues, if you can.

**Important:** If you get withdrawal symptoms (such as 'the shakes') when you stop drinking, this means you could be addicted to alcohol.

**Coming off alcohol too quickly could be very dangerous.** You should see a doctor or go to an advice and counselling centre before trying to stop.

## GETTING HELP

You may be able to control your own drinking, and stop it becoming a real problem. But you may find, like a large number of other people, that you really need further help.

If you think you are drinking too much, and need help to deal with this, it might be useful to talk to your GP.

There are also a number of agencies to help those with drink problems, and their families. **All the advice given is confidential.**

### Promoting Alcohol in a Responsible Manner

It should go without saying that those who serve alcohol to the public should consider the implications of how alcohol is marketed. For further guidance on responsible promotions please refer to the British Beer and Pub Association's Drinks Promotions guidance.

### Alcohol Concern

**020 7928 7377** - Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm

Waterbridge House, 32-36 Loman Street, London SE1 0EE

This is the national agency on alcohol misuse. They run a free and confidential on-line course. They say: "We think that drinking a reasonable amount is good for most people. What we want to do is to give you sufficient information for you to decide what is a reasonable amount for you to drink, then help you get there!

The online course is in six weekly parts. It takes less than an hour a week, for 6 weeks - online to complete the course, during which time we will teach you how to become a "Thinker Drinker" and develop safer drinking habits."

Website: [www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)

### Alcoholics Anonymous

National Helpline **0845 769 7555**

PO Box 1, Stonebow House, Stonebow, York YO1 2NJ

Alcoholics Anonymous works on a group basis. Members, who remain anonymous, share their experience, strength and hope with each other to help solve their common problem. If you want to join a group, then you have to commit yourself to try and give up drink. You don't have to pay anything.

Website: [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

### Al-Anon Family Groups UK and Eire

Self-help for friends and families of Alcoholics

Helpline: **020 7403 0888**

61 Great Dover Street, London SE1 4YF

Al-Anon offers understanding and support for families and friends of problem drinkers, whether the alcoholic is still drinking or not. **Alateen**, a part of Al-Anon, is for young people aged 12-20 who have been affected by someone else's drinking, usually that of a parent.

Website: [www.al-anonuk.org.uk](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk)

### BBPA

Tel: **020 7627 9191**

Market Towers, No 1 Nine Elms Lane, London, SW8 5NQ

The BBPA promotes and represents the beer and pub sector of the licensed drinks industry. It aims to promote sensible and responsible drinking.

Website: [www.beerandpub.com](http://www.beerandpub.com)

## D-RINK AWARE.CO.UK

A website run by the Portman Group, a body established by major drinks producers. The site offers information on the effects of alcohol and provides hints and tips on avoiding problems related to alcohol.

Website: [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

## Drinkline - The National Alcohol Helpline

(government sponsored)

**0800 917 8282** - (England and Wales) Monday to Friday: 9.00am - 11.00 pm

This is a telephone network, staffed by trained counsellors.

When you call Drinkline, they can give you facts about about safe drinking levels, and advice and help on ways to cut down on drinking, or to give it up altogether.

They can also help with practical advice about some of the wider problems caused by drink.

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## MORE HELP FROM THE LICENSED TRADE CHARITY

More information and support is available from the Licensed Trade Charity.

- There are further 'help with' leaflets including '**Relationship Breakdown**', '**Planning for Retirement**', '**Debt**', and '**Housing**'.
- Our website details other ways in which the charity may offer support.  
[www.licensedtradecharity.org.uk](http://www.licensedtradecharity.org.uk)
- Call our welfare department on **01344 884440**

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